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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 000150

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: SYMBOLIC PARLIAMENTARY RESOLUTION AGAINST IRAQI
VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN

REF: 04 AMMAN 09898

Classified By: CDA David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) Summary. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has started a voter registration media campaign for Iraqis in Jordan with the placement of billboards and posters throughout Amman. The Lower House of Parliament adopted a symbolic resolution January 5 against the electoral propaganda, alleging that it amounted to "interference in the internal affairs of another country." Foreign Minister al-Mulki and Royal Court Minister Rifai told Charge they were outraged at Parliament's action and that Interior Minister Habashneh would firmly rebut the non-binding resolution at Parliament's next session on January 10. Action request para 5. End Summary.

2. (C) Richard Scott, project manager for the Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) Program in Jordan run by the International Organization for Migration, confirmed to PolOff that his office had successfully launched a media campaign encouraging Iraqis to register to vote with the placement of billboards and posters around Amman. The OCV office concentrated voter registration posters in areas it believed housed large numbers of Iraqis, while billboards were distributed throughout the city. Scott said that radio and TV advertisements would follow shortly. He noted that he had heard of criticism of OCV registration of Iraqis in Jordan, but had not encountered any complaints directly.

3. (C) The OCV posters and billboards became the focus of a heated debate in Parliament January 5. MP Nariman Rousan (East Banker, Irbid - 5th Dist.) was the first to condemn the media campaign on the Lower House floor, alleging that it could transfer the armed struggle in Iraq into Jordan. Rousan, a woman whose businessman brother was killed in Iraq in July 2004 under mysterious circumstances, also complained that electoral registration and campaigning by Iraqis in Jordan was not authorized under Jordanian law. Several prominent MPs quickly jumped on the bandwagon, including head of the Legal Committee Ghaleb Zubi (East Banker, Balqa - 1st Dist.) and Abdul Kareem Dughmi ((East Banker, Mafrqa), who heads a loose coalition that includes roughly 50 MPs. The Lower House eventually approved, by a large majority, a symbolic resolution (which is not binding on the government) calling for the removal of electoral propaganda and declaring the OCV media campaign "an interference in the internal affairs of another country." Afterwards, some MPs told Pol FSN privately that they and others voted for the resolution primarily out of fear that the registration drive could attract the wrath of violent Iraqi insurgents, rather than out of opposition to the scheduled Iraqi elections.

4. (C) On the margins of a January 5 dinner hosted by King Abdullah, Foreign Minister al-Mulki and Royal Court Minister Samir Rifai expressed their outrage to Charge over the parliamentary resolution and pledged full GOJ support for the OCV program in Jordan. They stated that Parliament had no authority to intervene on this issue and promised that Interior Minister Habashneh would mount a vigorous rebuttal at Parliament's next session on January 10.

5. (C) At the same dinner, the King endorsed -- subject to our views -- an off-the-cuff proposal by FM Mulki to explore having IOM set up voting facilities on the Jordanian side of the Iraq/Jordan border, and bringing Sunnis across to vote in the safety of Jordan. Mulki said Jordan could waive immigration formalities, relying on voter ID cards for identification. Charge welcomed ideas to boost Sunni participation, but cautioned that security risks involved in transporting Iraqis to Jordan could be problematic. Department guidance appreciated.

6. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
HALE